

Why I Sit  
By: Alex Hosey

In the United States of America it is considered a shame or even a moral crime to sit for the National Anthem or the Pledge of Allegiance. As an African-American male I believe that if I did stand at this time I would be disrespecting myself and my people. The reason for this is because of our nation's long history of discrimination towards people of color that continues to this day. Not just blacks, but Muslims and other brown people.

People claim they aren't racist, even when their views clearly are, because they can't see themselves as "bad people." Let me explain. The common person views a hate group like the neo-Nazis or the KKK as the racists. So when they themselves are called a racist they become defensive, always having a comeback saying things like, "I don't hate blacks or anyone because of their skin color," or "I'm color blind." Things such as this are not completely true. If people were color blind, then they wouldn't be able to do things like pick out matching clothes, for instance. The thing that decides your outlook on life is how you grew up. Some people grow up in places where they are around multiple different cultures. Others grow up in a monolithic environment where they are only exposed to people that look exactly like them. This is possible because of the racism from the past.

People claim that the racism of the past doesn't affect the present, but that is not true. Back in the 1930's the government began to invest in the people by offering things like FHA (Federal Housing Administration) loans. These aren't like conventional home loans that require at least 20% down payment of the cost of the home of purchase. These were much more affordable home loans. The fact that blacks were intentionally excluded from this opportunity is the problem. Without the ability to get these loans, blacks (and sometimes foreigners) were not able to buy more expensive housing or houses at all. This helped introduce redlining. Redlining was where the banks didn't approve loans for blacks in certain areas such as the suburbs, even if they could afford it. The banks were able to do this since it was private property. In the deeds to these homes there would be statements such as, "No property in said addition shall at any time be sold, conveyed, rented, or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White or Caucasian race." *Page 80, The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America by Richard Rothstein.*

Therefore people that claim that blacks are lazy are ignorant of the fact that even if they could afford a certain property, blacks weren't able to get a loan from a bank unlike their white counterparts to be able to buy the property. Let me explain. If you were to buy a house with the money in your account - unless you're rich - how could you pay for daily essentials, such as food? That is why loans play such a large role in society, because they allow you to be able to pay off your house in manageable increments and build equity. So you can see how people without the ability to get loans with low interest rates and down payments may end up behind economically. This is when the gap for economic wealth began to grow and turn into a chasm between black and white people. People that were able to get these loans and buy these properties were able to then use these as an inheritance for their descendants. This also

caused a gap for the next generation after because while they may have started on a level playing field, in theory, whites actually had a leg up on blacks who were born without this help from their ancestors.

That was a generalization but we can bring it home to East Lansing. Black people were denied the ability to purchase property in East Lansing until April 8th of 1968, which ironically is four days after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and three days before the Fair Housing Act was enforced nationwide. Blacks were the main ones that were subjected to this discrimination. My grandfather, Samuel Hosey Sr., the first black pharmacist in Ingham County, and my grandmother, Helen Hosey, an Elementary school teacher, were among the first blacks to move into East Lansing to enroll their children (my aunts, and later my father) to the schools. The thing is, my grandparents had wanted a house in East Lansing since the mid-1960s, but knew it was illegal for them to purchase a home at the time. They thought that it would be smart to begin looking to move because of all of the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement and such. When they hired a realtor, however, he had something else in mind. He tried to send my grandparents to Churchill Downs on Lansing's south side because the policy of the bank was to keep blacks in a certain area (a redlined area). And the fact that the East Lansing City Government knew that this was happening and were complicit with these practices, is wrong. These racist practices were put in place by the banks, realtors, and homeowners. This racist collusion was allowed by local and state government and upheld in the courts all the way to the federal level.

I'm not trying to sit here and say I hate America because I don't. In fact, I would not rather live anywhere else. I love the freedoms that we have in this country such as the ability to become rich and the aspect of capitalism and how you can come from nothing and become something. I love our military. I know many people in our military such as family members and church members who have served and are currently serving. My grandfather served during the Korean War. I also love our police. My great-grandfather, Will Hosey, was a cop for many years and I have respect for what they do and their decisions most of the time. It is just that I would like for the history of all of this to not just be acknowledged, but also be taught so that people can understand where other cultures come from. I don't like that many people just assume that blacks and people of color are inherently lazy, violent or rebellious. I want it to be known that we are behind whites economically as planned. "As planned?" you may ask. Well, yes. According to a report by *Fusion*, the average white home has 13 times that amount of wealth of the average black family. Is this because black families don't work hard? No, it's because they started from behind.

I understand that the Anthem protests were started because of the police brutality tragedies. And I understand and respect their reasons for protesting against injustice. But my specific protest is to bring to light the injustices of the past and to have them discussed, recognized, and learned about. Winston Churchill said, "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." According to Pew Research I am 6 times more likely to be imprisoned in my lifetime than my white peers. I understand that I may sound like I am talking theory, and that I am only a high school freshman, but I am trying to do my best to uphold these values myself.

For the past couple of years I have been helping to feed the less fortunate at a local food pantry, and I have also helped provide clothes and meals during winter holidays.

I am protesting the National Anthem, but there are two things that would compel me to stand once again. First, I would ask for the East Lansing School District to teach the history and effects of redlining of people of color both nationally and locally, as portrayed in the article "*A house divided: The movement in East Lansing to open housing for blacks,*" by Bill Castanier, published Feb 25, 2015 in the *Lansing City Pulse*. Second, I would ask for Mayor Mark Meadows of East Lansing to issue a public acknowledgement and apology to blacks and other people of color for the city's role in redlining, mistreatment and discrimination. The City of East Lansing, its police department and the local realtors directly caused black people not to have access to the resources (money, property and education) that their white counterparts had.